

The Mysterious Ways of Wang Foo. *By Sidney C. Partridge.*

THE GREEN SEDAN

"CHIAO LAI! CHIAO LAI!" shrieked the two forward coolies as they pushed the people right and left in the crowded streets of Kowloon to make way for the burden on their shoulders. "Lai Liao! Lai Liao!" echoed back the two coolies at the rear as they struggled to keep pace with those in front. "Sedan coming! sedan coming!" was the cry that opened up the way for the chair between the long lines of pedestrians like a wedge, and "It has come! it has come!" was the signal to close up the ranks again as the bearers hurried along. The multitude—always patient and pliable—were a little more ready than usual to yield the right of way when they saw that the bearers wore blue jackets and red tasseled hats of official servants and that the sedan-chair was covered with the green cloth of the mandarin and not with the ordinary blue of the civilian. They hurried along until they came to the canal that divided the Chinese city from the British concession and turning sharply to the right reached the stone bridge of the Silver Cloud and passing over entered his majesty's dominions of Kowloon, opposite Hongkong, better known in their own flowery tongue as "the Nine dragons that face the fragrant waters."

"Hia Chiao! Hia chiao!" shrieked the forward crew. "Lower the sedan! lower the sedan!" "Hia Liao! Hia Liao!" "It is lowered! it is lowered!" responded the rear guard, as the caravan came to a sudden halt and deposited their burden at the feet of Capt. Brownlow of the colonial police and two English and Chinese deputies, who were waiting there to receive them. The officer who accompanied the chair and who had been riding closely behind it on his shaggy Mongolian pony with his string of jangling sleigh bells, descended and bowing low to the foreigners drew forth from his voluminous sleeve a red leather wallet, and opening it handed the captain a document covered with vermilion seals. The latter unfolded it and, with the assistance of his secretary-interpreter, read as follows:

Yamen of the Northern Hsien,
District of Kowloon, Canton.
19th day of the 5th moon.

To His Excellency,
The Governor of Hongkong, greeting:
Sir—Acting under instructions from his excellency the taotai of this circuit, we hereby hand over to your authority for the administration of justice the person of one Ling Took, accused of murder within the limits of the European colony. The prisoner is being conveyed out of the Chinese boundaries in an official chair (instead of being chained as usual in an open basket), to avoid suspicion and to prevent any attempt at rescue on the part of his fellow villagers, who are reported to be lurking in the vicinity.

With respect and compliments, I am, sir,
WANG CHING TANG,
Magistrate of the District.

"Well, Mackintosh," said the captain to his deputy, "the prisoner certainly is traveling in style this time, eh? Squatting in a mandarin's chair is a lot more comfortable than being hung to a bamboo pole with a bunch of rusty chains, mark my words."

"It surely is, sir," replied the deputy, "and it's mighty clever of them to smuggle him through the town that way, isn't it? If they'd just brought him through like one of the regulars, he might never have reached us at all."

"Have those handcuffs ready when we take him out. I don't know whether they've got him safely ironed up inside there or not and, you know, they're as slippery as eels and we can't afford to lose him now."

"Right you are, sir."

"Here, Ching," turning to the interpreter, "just ask our friend the cavalry rider if he's got him securely fastened inside the chair."

Ching turned to the officer and rattled off enough words—according to Brownlow's idea—to have said the thing over about fifteen times in any other tongue and the officer on his part rattled back about the same quantity of expletives, accompanied by the most expressive and emphatic gestures.

"He's all right, sir," said Ching, "he's ironed hand and foot and locked to the back of the chair. He can't move an inch."

"Who's got the key?"

"The officer here has the key, sir, and we can take him right out now."

"All right, open the sedan up, then."

They started to unhook the heavy front curtains, which completely concealed the personage within, when they were interrupted by the clamoring of the chairbearers for wine

money. "Yang Lao Yea! Yang Lao Yea! Ching Chiu Chien!" they cried, bowing and scraping and extending their palms into the very faces of the officers; "Ocean Mandarin! Ocean Mandarin! Ocean Mandarin! Please grant the wine-tip."

"What's the matter now? Oh, more cumshaw, it it? Well, I suppose they've a hard job to get him here, so give them two Mexicans for the four of them and tell them to keep quiet. I suppose it would be beneath the dignity of the official to accept anything, wouldn't it?"

"Oh, yes, sir, he couldn't take anything openly before the coolies, but I'll just slip a five-dollar note into his sleeve while they're looking the other way, sir, and that will make it all right with the dignity. He'll save his face and the money at the same time."

"Well, what are the beggars saying now? For goodness sake! They don't want more, do they?"

"Oh, no, sir; they are just expressing their thanks to you; that's all."

"What's this Yang something they're always saying?"

"Why, that's 'ocean mandarin,' sir, their politest title for you all."

"Ocean mandarin! Do they take us



HE TRACED THE CHINESE CHARACTER FOR "CASH."

for admirals or navy men of any kind?"

"Not at all, sir. The word 'ocean' simply means 'foreign' and applies to any one who comes from across the seas to China; and, not knowing your exact rank, they simply say 'mandarin,' and that covers it all."

The native officer drew from his belt a bunch of crutious brass keys, and, lifting the double curtains, called to two of his assistants to help him unlock the prisoner. He started back, and, throwing up both hands wildly into the air, shrieked out. "He has escaped!" Sure enough, he was gone—chains, handcuffs, padlocks and all. But he had left something very significant behind him; something gruesome and tale-telling that would add a ghastly interest to the mystery of his going.

"What's this?" cried Brownlow, as, reaching inside, he tried to draw forth from the back of the chair a bloody knife that had been plunged—evidently with great force—right through the cushion into the wood behind. He worked it loose, and, holding it up to the astonished gaze of his deputies, saw that it was not a dagger such as the old warriors carried, but a common sharp-pointed carving knife, such as is used by the ordinary Chinese cook in the kitchen.

"Is this murder or is this a threat and a warning?"

"Both, I reckon," said Mackintosh, "but what's that piece of paper sticking to it?"

The captain drew from the blade a piece of yellow paper with Chinese symbols upon it. He was about to ask the interpreter to read it when he suddenly changed his mind and, folding it carefully up, placed it in his wallet and added significantly: "There's just one pair of Chinese eyes that's going to look at that for me, and Wang Foo's the man that owns them. Here! Wrap this knife carefully up in your handkerchief and

take it back with you to headquarters," he said, as he handed the weapon to his deputy, "and mind you don't lose those cash that are tied around the handle, see?"

The captain entered the sedan and, striking a match, looking around very carefully for any further signs of the prisoner or of bloody legacies that he might have left behind, but there was nothing whatever to be seen; everything inside seemed to be in perfect order. He stepped out again and ordered the deputies immediately to place the four chairbearers and the officer under arrest, as they were on British soil, and would be needed as witnesses if not as important accessories to the crime. Alas! He was just too late. They, also, had vanished like the mysterious occupant of the chair. The moment they realized what had happened each one fled in a different direction. "Tung-Si-Nam-Pok" (east-west-south-north), they screamed, and to these various points of the celestial compass they scampered, throwing away their official hats and jackets as they did so, for they knew only too well that the sword of the executioner would be awaiting them if they were caught. The tail of the Mongolian pony was the only thing left in sight as he disappeared over the bridge of the Silver Cloud with his rider, who likewise bade a very unceremonious farewell to his Britannic majesty's dominions.

"Well," remarked the philosophical Mackintosh, "Mr. Ling Took has certainly been 'took,' and all that's left for us now is to find out who did the taking. I suppose, captain, we'd better lug this sedan with us back to headquarters."

"By all means, it will form an important link in the evidence—that is, if we ever get any evidence."

Four wharf coolies were quickly hired and the green sedan was carried on board the Hongkong ferry-boat, followed by the police party

who were returning rather crestfallen minus their expected prisoner, but guarding very carefully two rather important mementos of him, namely: the magistrate's official transfer and the blood-stained kitchen knife with its mysterious slip of yellow paper and the string of copper cash.

The preceding chapters of the story, up to the time of the discovery of the empty sedan chair by Capt. Brownlow and his officers, were briefly as follows: Ah Sam, faithful servant and number one house boy of Mr. and Mrs. Morton of Peak road terrace, Hongkong, had mysteriously disappeared about two months before and, in spite of every effort of the police to trace him, he had failed to reveal his whereabouts. There seemed to be but two possible solutions, viz: either he had left for parts unknown—possibly the colonies or America—to secure a raise of salary, or he had fallen overboard from a sampan in the harbor, while crossing to visit his relatives on the Kowloon side. About a month after his disappearance, however, an entirely new aspect was given to the case by the finding of a yellow paper parcel on the front doorstep of the Morton residence with these words written upon the cover, "For the man who overturned my rice-bowl." On opening it, it was found to contain the hat and gown of Ah Sam with a kitchen knife spotted with blood, and driven through a thick piece of red paper cut in the rough shape of a human heart!

Mr. Morton very promptly put the whole case into the hands of Inspector Wallace of the police, with the result that suspicion at once centered on Ling Took, his former cook, whom Ah Sam was reputed to have been the cause of discharging.

The native detectives explained that the phrase "overturning my rice-bowl" was merely the current expres-

sion among servants for "engaging another man in my place," and the paper heart with the knife blade driven through it was a delicate and significant way of saying, "This is what I would like to do to you if I could get hold of you." The inclosure of the hat and the gown—which were positively identified by Mrs. Morton and the servants as being Ah Sam's—seemed to indicate that Ling Took had secured his heart's desire and wreaked his vengeance on the house boy. Now as all Asiatics have a habit, after committing a crime, of returning, almost without exception, to the haunts of their native town or village—probably with the idea of securing the propitiation of their local divinities—the authorities naturally sought for the missing cook in the Kowloon district and it was not very long before they discovered him concealed in the garret of a bean-oil shop which was presided over by his mother's uncle. Two little street urchins had recognized him one day and volunteered, quite innocently, to lead the yamen runners directly to the house. He was promptly seized and dragged by the cue to the yamen, where, in spite of his shrieks for mercy and the loud protestations of his relatives and friends, he was given a preliminary bamboozing—"just to quiet him down"—and thrown into a loathsome cell. The taotai, acting under instructions from his excellency the viceroy of Canton (who was quite anxious for political reasons to keep on good terms with the governor of the colony), had ordered to have him handed over to the English police and arrangements had been made to meet them at the international boundary by the Bridge of the Silver Cloud on the very day that our story opens.

In the meantime his relatives and acquaintances had left no stone unturned to secure his release. Every dollar in the native bank and every cash that could be borrowed or "squeezed" out of the business of the family had been offered for bribes, but, strange to say, so far without success. As a last resort they threatened mob violence, and papers attached to stones and tiles were thrown over the walls into the magistrate's courtyard announcing that neither he nor his jailers would ever reach "the foreign devils' boundary alive. Late on a Monday evening two runners were sent out from the yamen; one bore a message to all the teahouses and gathering places of the town that Ling Took would be delivered over to the foreigners on Wednesday morning, and the other bore a sealed message to the governor that he would be handed over at the Bridge of the Silver Cloud at noon on Tuesday. The mob gathered early on Wednesday around the yamen gates, and, increased from a hundred or two to nearly a thousand—friends, loafers, vagabonds, curiosity-seekers and all the rabble of a Chinese town—demanded in forcible terms the release of the prisoner. Suddenly a company of soldiers armed with spears and old-fashioned muskets appeared at the entrance and with the beating of two large gongs raised a banner with these words upon it: "Let all the people take notice! By order of his excellency the viceroy, Ling Took, the murderer, was handed over to his excellency the Governor of Hongkong for punishment yesterday morning. Let all the people now quietly disperse, or most serious consequences will follow!" Realizing then that they had been outwitted by their own officials, the crowd took the only satisfaction that was left them, and, heaping curses and execrations upon the heads of all in the yamen, they threw all the available stones over the walls into the courtyard and, bespattering the whole front of the hall of justice with mud, slowly and sullenly dispersed.

The prisoner, on the morning before, having been securely ironed on hands and feet, and having also been duly gagged to prevent an outcry, was, in the magistrate's presence, chained to the chair of his secretary's sedan and, the curtain being closely drawn, was smuggled out of the town without arousing even the slightest suspicion. What became of him and how, without disturbing the sedan in any way and without attracting the notice of his bearers, who were both before him and behind him, he escaped and left the bloody knife in his place, was a genuine mystery, destined to baffle the minds of Chinese and Europeans alike.

In the upper room at No. 5-5-5 of the Red Cloud Wang Foo, the prince of detectives, was resting in his bamboo chair after a day of rather strenuous labors. Old Chang, the